

Testimony IN OPPOSITION to SB 1148, An Act Authorizing Certain Killing and Hunting of Black Bear and Prohibiting Bird Feeders and Other Unintentional and Intentional Feeding of Potentially Dangerous Animals

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 1148

SB 1148 is a horrific proposal to the bear-human conflicts in Connecticut, by allowing a bear hunt.

Bears, as a species, do not need to be managed. They have evolved to keep their population in check by a natural process known as delayed implantation (whereby a fetus will only develop in the mother's womb if the mother's body fat is over a certain amount; under that and the fetus will be reabsorbed into the mother's body). The fact that there are more bears in Connecticut means that they are able to be supported by foods available.

The real problem is people feeding bears and not being held responsible when they encourage bears to come onto private property. Leaving bird feeders and trash cans out, actively encouraging bears so videos can be taken, leaving pet food in easy to access areas, not protecting chicken coops, beehives and crops, all contributes to bears becoming emboldened. There is not enough public outreach or educational campaigns regarding this. Most people I know do not recognize this as a problem, so they will not take any steps to deter bears. The DEEP, instead of promoting a bear lottery--killing the bears who, by no fault of their own, are now conditioned to go onto people's properties--should be engaged heavily in public awareness campaigns to stop inadvertently or advertently feeding bears. Public awareness campaigns do work, but people need to hear about them in order for them to have any effect. There is a complete lack of awareness around the bear-human conflict issue.

A bear lottery will not solve the problem of bears going onto people's lands. The bears who are emboldened are not the same bears who are living deep in the woods. A bear lottery will ensure the bears living deep in the woods--far from humans--will be the ones killed. Thus leaving the bears who are living and feeding near people's houses free to keep doing so. A bear lottery will provide the antithesis of a solution; rather, it will promulgate more problems.

The change needs to come from people and their habits. That is the driving force behind nearly all the bear-human conflicts; punishing (ie. killing) the bears will not change anything if the human's behavior doesn't change first.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.

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